

March 22, 2022

Honorable Sidney H. Stein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: United States v. Victor Rivera, Case No. 21-CR-221 (SHS)

My name is Christine Burgos, I am submitting this letter on behalf of and in support of Victor Rivera.

Currently, I hold the position of Executive Administrative Assistant to the CEO at JASA (Jewish Association Serving the Aging). I have over fifteen years of experience working in the Social Services field working with NY Foundling, Services for the Underserved, Center for Urban Community Services, and Bronx Parent Housing Network. I started as a receptionist, with only a Highschool diploma. Today, I am in the process of completing my second year at Lehman College. Throughout my career, I was rejected countless times due to not meeting the educational requirements. In the positions that I did get hired for, my salary was capped for the same reasons. As a domestic violence survivor and being a single mother of one, having only a high school diploma and trying to elevate my career was difficult. One thing about me, I am resilient. I do not take rejection for what some may see negatively, I look at it as it just wasn't meant for me because better will come.

That moment came when I applied for a position at Bronx Parent Housing Network in August 2019. I had applied for the position of Operations Manager. I was interviewed by the Director of Operations and was unexpectedly introduced to the then CEO, Mr. Victor Rivera. The Director showed Mr. Rivera my resume, we discussed my career goals, my experience in the Social Service field, and why I loved it so much. He didn't feel the Operations Manager position was the right fit for me based on my experience and our discussion. He went on to inform me, his current Executive Administrator may be leaving the company and thought my background would make me a good candidate for the position. I was told he would keep me in mind if the position became vacant. It was not until a year later that I came across the vacant position on Indeed, so I applied. Immediately, I reached out to Mr. Rivera, as a reminder that I was still interested in the position and had applied for it online. I was interviewed by the Human Resources Department, Mr. Rivera, and the CAO of the company, completed all the required testing, and was hired for the position of Executive Administrator. I finally received an opportunity to elevate my career and learn straight from a CEO that worked day and night to give back to the community we grew up in.

From my first encounter with Mr. Rivera, he has always been respectful, kind-hearted, empathetic, and helpful. Although I had previously read about Mr. Rivera, his background story, and his mission with this organization, being able to work with him and see firsthand how sincere he is when it comes to helping those in need, I knew this was going to be an experience, unlike my previous career experiences. As his Executive Administrator, I handled plenty of calls

from clients, non-clients in the community, staff, and plenty of others outside the organization. Any time we received a call about someone in need, especially children, Mr. Rivera would do what most CEOs wouldn't, he would get on the phone and ask about their situation, gather as much information, and find ways to assist a family in need. Whether they needed food, clothing, or just needed to be directed to resources and organizations that could help. A few of the projects I worked on were Thanksgiving pantry supplies for clients, Christmas Toys for the children at all sites and Puerto Rico, ensuring our pantry was always stocked, working with affiliated youth programs, and handling clothing donations. Throughout all these projects, Mr. Rivera would always check in with me to make sure we didn't miss anyone, and every client would receive all they needed. It was Christmas that stood out to me the most, we received donations and purchased items for each child within the organization. Daily, Mr. Rivera would ask that I double-check the numbers for each site to ensure every child would get something. He believed no matter what, no child should wake up without a gift on Christmas morning. I look up to Mr. Rivera for always having a big heart, always being willing to give and help the next person prosper. Knowing that I was working with the type of CEO I aspire to become and being able to learn from him, I had hit the jackpot in my career. With all the higher management I have worked with, Mr. Rivera has been the most humane, warm-hearted, kind, and giving person I have met.

I have witnessed Mr. Rivera inspire many staff, clients, and teenagers. He has donated scholarship funds to his alma mater (MCNY), coordinated several community fairs and backpack giveaways throughout the Bronx, re-started a soup kitchen program during a pandemic, donated suits, and dresses to teens in need for graduation, gave out PPE & Pantry food throughout the pandemic to ensure individuals within the community would have access to food during the city shut down, hand out hot meals on Thanksgiving, and worked with several smaller community organizations. Most CEOs would do these things for the photo ops, not Mr. Rivera, he would stand in the cold weather giving out hot meals, toys, or backpacks, mingle with the crowds, making sure everyone was taken care of, served, and simply having a good time. He could hold a conversation with individuals during these events and forget that his time was limited, it didn't matter if he was running late, he would not cut the conversation when speaking with community members. He wants to help everyone he crosses paths with.

One thing that has been most inspirational to me about Mr. Rivera is his determination to change his life around after becoming a teen dad, being incarcerated, and having a difficult upbringing. He has triumphed through all the odds against him. Rather than running away from the community that raised him straight into a midtown office, he built an organization dedicated to helping those in need, in that same community. As a teenager growing up in the Bronx, I can recall having relatives go to events like those coordinated by Mr. Rivera. I appreciated going to the events because, for some, it helped people get by when they needed it most. It was seeing community work at a young age that inspired me to go in the direction of Social Service.

Working with Mr. Rivera, inspired me to go back to school after almost 13 years. I spoke with him regarding my decision, and he was very supportive and encouraging. I expressed my interest in starting my own non-profit for Domestic Violence survivors, being one myself, I know there are not many programs available. Mr. Rivera informed me of the educational background I would need to pursue my dreams. We discussed schools with good programs, such as his alma

mater MCNY. I returned to college in 2020, now amid completing my second year and halfway through my degree. Before meeting Mr. Rivera, returning to school wasn't a concept in my mind but hearing his story, having his support, encouragement, and guidance was motivating. He also put me in connection with a smaller organization leader in the community that was geared towards Domestic Violence survivors, I was able to help coordinate a few of their events. Additionally, I got to speak with the CEO of that organization and get more insight on what programs were out there for DV and what was needed.

Mr. Rivera gave me a chance when many doors were being closed on me, in turn, developing a relationship with him opened my mind, elevated my goals, and allowed me experiences I would not have had without him, his advice, and guidance. We discussed me being a single mom and a domestic violence survivor, he expressed he was raised by a single mother and how hard it was on him as a child. He understood many of the situations I had been through in life and often reminded me that I have a little girl looking up to me, I should never let anyone or anything limit the achievements I can achieve.

As a DV survivor, it is very difficult to trust anyone. Always fearing someone will harm you, whether physically or mentally, you always have your guards up. Mr. Rivera showed me not everyone is out to harm me, some people cross paths in life to help you elevate and progress on your journey. He is a very spiritual person, on my bad days, he would remind me, God, only gives us what he knows we can handle, and reiterating prayer and faith are important in this world. Being able to confide in someone after so long, while receiving encouragement, guidance, and motivation is refreshing. It is people like Mr. Rivera any individual would want to have in their circle of friends. One that allows you to be your true self and is there to uplift you, give you constructive criticism, honesty, and tell you the truth when you make a mistake.

When the report on Mr. Rivera hit the media, I immediately reached out to him to check on his well-being. I wanted him to know regardless of any speculations, he still had a friend in me and if he needed to talk, I would always be there. He had been that friend to me, and I wanted to return that favor. Throughout this ordeal, he has broken down on several occasions, with feelings of remorse and has taken full accountability for his actions. He has lost several people who were once his closest friends and inner circle. I have reminded him, we are human, we all make mistakes, it is a matter of taking accountability, admitting your wrongs, learning from your mistakes, and putting those lessons to use so the mistakes are not repeated. We all deserve second chances in life, Mr. Rivera gave me that chance and I pray he will get his second chance.

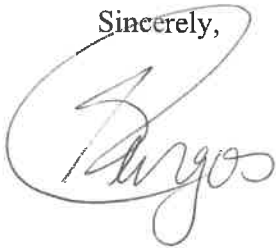
Upon Mr. Rivera's departure from the organization, I was later dismissed. Immediately, I began looking for jobs, I couldn't be without a job. As a single mother, this became very stressful, putting in hundreds of applications daily, and constantly being rejected due to the lack of education. I had applied to JASA for the Executive Administrative Assistant position and received a call for an interview. Like many jobs, they required a bachelor's degree, experience in the position, writing samples, and references. I reached out to Mr. Rivera, and he allowed me to use him as a reference. He spoke with the CEO of the organization. In speaking with the CEO, she informed me, Mr. Rivera discussed his experience with me as his Administrator, which gave her better insight into my strengths and drive. They did discuss my educational background and

although it did not meet the requirements, she was informed about my resilience and efforts to learn things I did not know. In combination with the other two references, she was able to look past the lack of education. I received a soft offer and while discussing salaries, I was able to negotiate an amount that was normally offered to those with the required education.

I do not believe, without Mr. Rivera giving me that initial chance to work with him, I wouldn't have gotten to where I am today. His triumphs have been encouraging for me to face everything that comes my way rather than running in fear. He has taught me never to give up, to keep going. There is no such thing as no, just not right now's. He has been there to cheer me on when I have achieved another goal. I am not the only person he has done these things for; many have been able to walk through doors they may not have gotten the chance to had it not been for Mr. Rivera. His mission when starting his organization was to help others in the Bronx, that did not just mean he wanted to help clients, he has helped many that were employed by him, went to church with him, and anyone that took the time to open up to him.

Thank you, Judge Stein, for taking the time to read this letter, and considering its contents, I ask that you be merciful in sentencing Mr. Rivera.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Burgos", enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Christine Burgos